

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, we know that we have a crisis of mental health across America, and it impacts gun violence, homelessness, and so many other factors. One in five U.S. adults live with mental illness. One in seven in California.

As a result of the pandemic, more Americans have felt alone, scared, and depressed. In my district there is a severe lack of access to mental health in culturally and linguistically challenged areas, especially in southeast Fresno.

In response, we secured \$1.5 million to provide expanded mental health and recovery services. That is not enough. We need to do much more throughout the valley and throughout our country.

The lack of investment in mental health services and resources has also fueled a rise in homelessness, as we know, and gun violence in our country. Not even 1 month into 2023, we have had 39 mass shootings that have taken place in America. From Monterey Park in California, Half Moon Bay, to Goshen, California, all three in our State, we have been torn apart by senseless gun violence.

Americans have offered thoughts and prayers. Those are good but not enough. We need further action on gun reform and mental health support. It is critical.

As the chair of the Crime Survivors and Justice Caucus, I am advocating that we build on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act by hiring more mental health providers, strengthening access to treatment, and expanding resources to our youth. It is very necessary today with our young people.

To all my fellow Americans, it is okay not to be okay. It is okay to ask for help and dial 988. Let's break the stigma and try to save lives.

FLOODS AND WATER STORAGE

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, most are aware that in California we seem to have extreme floods and extreme droughts. Certainly, that has been proven true in the last month.

Last week, I met with local, State, and Federal California water leaders to discuss our efforts to divert flood control and improve groundwater recharge.

Recent storms have dumped over 32 trillion, with a t, gallons of water in California, and the weather forecasters are anticipating that in February we will have more rain.

We need to be better prepared to avoid what happened in Planada, California where over half of the community was flooded and farmworkers and others lost their homes. A grammar school was literally inundated and now the 300 students are being taught at a middle school.

More needs to be done to deal with the displaced farmworkers and the impacts to farmers.

I am working with Governor Newsom and the White House to streamline the process to divert floodwater and increase water storage. It is absolutely

necessary with climate change and other factors we are dealing with.

We have secured some funding to begin to fix our infrastructure. It is time we get these projects permitted and shovels in the ground. Let's get to work.

USDA FUNDING FOR DAIRY PRODUCERS

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, California is also the number one agriculture State in the Nation. Dairy producers are a key part of that production. They are feeling the pinch of the pandemic, an unsteady market, and increases in feed and input costs, which impact the bottom line.

From milk to cheese that we all enjoy, dairy producers have been working tirelessly to put food on America's dinner table. California produces over 20 percent of all the milk in America.

I am proud to announce that I, along with some of my Republican and Democratic colleagues, have worked with Secretary Vilsack to secure \$100 million in additional aid to support the dairy producers recovering from the impacts of COVID-19.

As the leading dairy-producing State in the Union, this funding will help California dairy farmers so they can continue to produce and deliver the most nutritious products around the world.

□ 1045

HONORING THE CAREER OF KERRI DONIS

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, today I honor careers of individuals who make a difference, such as the career of Kerri Donis.

Madam Speaker, I want to honor Chief Kerri Donis for 27 years of her fearless leadership and courageous service to the Fresno Fire Department. Kerri is the first woman to hold the position as the department's chief in a country where only 4 percent of the firefighters are women.

Under her leadership, the department has grown to 402 personnel for the city of Fresno. She has created programs like Girls Empowerment Camp which introduces fire service careers for young women.

Chief Donis will be remembered for her selfless acts and for consistently putting safety for her firefighters and the community above all else.

Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating Chief Kerri Donis on her retirement.

GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today not only for Half Moon Bay and Monterey Park, but for Oakland, Goshen, and San Francisco; for Dallas and for Houston; for Red Springs, High Point, and Durham; for Chicago and Rockford; for Tunica Resorts; for Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and New Orleans; for Fort Pierce, San-

ford, Homestead, Ocala, and Miami Gardens; for Phoenix; for St. Louis; for Cleveland and Columbus; for Allentown, Philadelphia; for Minneapolis; for Denver; for Albany, Georgia; for Huntsville; for Enoch; for Baltimore; for Dumfries; and for Washington, D.C.

We are 26 days into the new year, and in those 26 days, there have been 40 mass shootings in our country. That is 40 mass shootings—73 innocent Americans killed. These were mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters who should still be with us today. My heart is broken for every single, solitary one of them.

How much more heartbreak must our Nation endure?

How many more lives must we lose?

How many more times must we watch as another safe space, another sanctuary, another school, or another celebration becomes a site for a shooting?

How many times must I come to the floor and make this plea?

Our moments of silence won't save a single, solitary soul.

We have seen more mass shootings in the first month of 2023 than in any other January on record. The new year should mark new beginnings, new progress, and new hope. Instead, we find ourselves moving backward. In less than a month, this year has become one defined by shock and sorrow.

Every other country in the developed world has managed to rein in gun violence. In 1996, Australia enacted commonsense firearm regulations following a mass shooting, and gun deaths were cut in half. In the U.K., just one school shooting pushed the government to pass lifesaving gun violence prevention measures. New Zealand banned assault weapons almost immediately after the Christchurch massacre.

Where our peer nations choose to act, America chooses to stand by in the face of tragedy after tragedy after tragedy.

A safer America is possible. We can end the gun violence epidemic. We can build a culture of rational, reasonable, and responsible firearm ownership. We can ban the weapons of war used in so many mass shootings. In fact, we have done it in the past.

From 1994 to 2004, the United States banned assault weapons. During that time, gun deaths plummeted, but they shot right back up as soon as the ban was lifted.

We have the resources and the precedent to do that again. What we need is the political will. Ending gun violence is not an issue of can't. It is an issue of won't.

My Republican colleagues won't ban assault weapons, they won't ban large magazines, and they won't pass universal background checks.

The gun violence epidemic is a stain upon the fabric of our Nation, and that stain grows deeper every second that Congress chooses not to pass substantial gun violence prevention legislation.

Last year, we did take a key step in the right direction by passing the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. But make no mistake, Madam Speaker. That was the beginning, and we cannot allow it to end there.

I am grateful that my colleague, DAVID CICILLINE, plans to reintroduce an assault weapons ban. I, too, am choosing to act. I will soon reintroduce my bill to stop online ammunition sales.

Madam Speaker, I stand here confident that my Democratic colleagues will stand behind this commonsense legislation.

From Sandy Hook to Uvalde, from Monterey Park to Trenton, New Jersey, every mass shooting is a policy choice. Democrats are prepared to choose better, and I demand that my Republican colleagues do the same.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, Ronald Reagan was prescient in his description of Congress, especially as Congress addresses issues, most specifically, the debt ceiling.

Here is what Ronald Reagan had to say about Congress:

Congress consistently brings government to the edge of default before facing its responsibility. This brinkmanship threatens the holders of government bonds and those who rely on Social Security and veterans benefits.

Let me repeat that: those who rely on Social Security, you could add Medicare and veterans benefits.

That is what is at stake here.

Reagan went on to say:

Interest rates would skyrocket, instability would occur in the financial markets, and the Federal deficit would soar.

Why, then, would our colleagues on the other side of the aisle hold the American economy hostage?

In their own words: so they can cut Social Security and Medicare.

They call these programs entitlements.

For all of those listening to this, make sure you call your Member of Congress, and let them know that Social Security is not an entitlement. It is an earned benefit. It is something that people pay for weekly, biweekly, or monthly.

How do they know?

How do we trust and verify this?

All you have to do, Madam Speaker, is go to your pay stub. It says: FICA. That stands for Federal Insurance Contribution. That is Federal Insurance Contribution.

Whose?

Yours—the more than 66 million Americans who contribute to this program. It is an earned benefit. It is not an entitlement.

They clearly are entitled to their Social Security.

But here we have the ruse of the year. We are going to hold the American economy hostage so that we can make cuts to a program that Congress hasn't enhanced in more than 52 years on our watch—ours being every Member of Congress. We cannot let this persist.

Fortunately, because of hard work in the past, seniors are receiving a COLA this year because of COVID. But it has not been reformed, it is not permanent, and there hasn't been a benefit enhancement in 52 years.

In 1971, a loaf of bread cost 72 cents. I don't have to go through the litany of how costs have risen.

With 10,000 baby boomers a day becoming eligible for Social Security, this is not the time to cut the program. This is a time to enhance the program so that all of our seniors—especially those who were hit hardest by the epidemic.

How do we know this?

Of the more than 1 million people who passed away from the pandemic, over 750,000 are over the age of 65.

And who is impacted most by inflation?

Those people who are on a fixed income, and by definition, those on Social Security are on a fixed income and need our help the most during this time of inflation. It impacts every single district in this country.

On average, there are 147,000 Social Security recipients in every congressional district, and to deny them the enhancements that they need during this inflationary time and during a time period when Congress has not enhanced the program in more than 52 years is long overdue.

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CASTEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTEN. Madam Speaker, this has been a bloody week in America. It seems like every day we have woken up to news of another mass shooting, starting with the one 5 days ago when a gunman, armed with an assault pistol and high-capacity magazine, killed 11 Californians as they celebrated Lunar New Year.

Three weeks from now, Valentine's Day will be the 15th anniversary of a mass shooting on the Northern Illinois University campus in DeKalb. The shooter started firing at 3:06 p.m. By 3:11 p.m.—just 5 minutes later—he had taken his own life. But not before firing off 55 rounds of ammunition, killing 6 people and injuring another 21.

In Parkland, Florida, on Valentine's Day they don't memorialize Northern Illinois University, they memorialize the anniversary of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. That shooting lasted for 6 minutes, 139 rounds were fired, 17 people were killed, and 17 were injured.

Six months from now, on Independence Day, folks in Highland Park, Illi-

nois, will be memorializing the first anniversary of a mass shooting when 83 rounds were fired, 7 people were killed, and 48 were injured before the police—who were present at the scene—could even identify the location of the shooter.

We do not get our holidays back unless we act.

Too often, this body has responded to these shootings with thoughts and prayers. Prayers that the American people won't notice that some of my colleagues are putting the economic interests of gun manufacturers ahead of people's lives. But every once in a while, we do act. I want to talk about what we are capable of when we are touched by the better angels of our nature.

To do that, let's flash back to another Valentine's Day not that long ago. Two Chicago gangs were fighting over narcotics turf. One of them surprised the other, and in a flash of bullets, seven people were dead. Chicagoans and Illinoisans—Americans—were outraged. Yes, these were gang members, but they didn't deserve to die.

The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre was in 1929. It was when Al Capone's Italian gang killed seven members of Bugs Moran's Irish gang as whiskey bootleggers fought over drug turf. And we acted. That shooting led to the passage of the National Firearms Act that banned civilian access to fully automatic Tommy guns and any rifle with a barrel longer than 18 inches.

That law is still on the books today. It saves lives, and no one has ever claimed it was unconstitutional.

By the way, Madam Speaker, if you weren't expecting that a story about Chicago gangs was going to be about White people, I would like to thank you for attending today's class in critical race theory. As that poet Ice Cube says: You better check yourself.

But I digress.

Seven people died in 1929, and we acted. Eleven people died on Lunar New Year 5 days ago. There have been 40 mass shootings in the first 26 days of this year, over 1,300 gun homicides in the United States this year, and another 1,700 gun suicides. I am proud that my State of Illinois has just passed an assault weapons ban. It is time for this body to do the same.

I know I speak for all Americans when I say that I want to enjoy my next holiday without fear of getting shot, and that inaction in the wake of way too many avoidable deaths is completely unacceptable.

□ 1100

PRIORITIES FOR 118TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the first time during this